

LIFESTYLE COLUMNISTS

Reading up on sugar yields sweet science at library

Yesterday 9:00 p.m.

As the year progresses, resolutions made in January start to slip away. Keeping track of the amount of sugar in your diet, however, can be crucial to achieving and maintaining good health.

Resources at your Abilene Public Library may help you to do just that.

First, be sure to read food package labels. Look for sugar, of course, but also for honey, syrup, concentrated fruit juice or dehydrated cane juice. All of these are sugars, whether they're organic and "healthy" or not.

Anything with sugar, syrup or sweetener as part of the name will be a sugar. Cane is a key word, too. Cane sugar, cane crystals, evaporated cane juice — all sugars.

There are others, like honey, that don't actually say sugar in the name. These include agave nectar, dextrin, maltodextrin, molasses, sorghum and treacle.

"J.J. Virgin's Sugar Impact Diet: Drop 7 Hidden Sugars, Lose Up To 10 Pounds in Just 2 Weeks" explains how to look for sugars we often eat without realizing it.

Then, there are all those items that end with "ose." That particular suffix generally means sugar. Enough different sugars on a label could make sugar the first ingredient if they were all lumped together. Because each sugar is listed separately, they may appear much farther down on the label and give the impression that there isn't that much sugar in the product.

"The Sugar Trap and How to Avoid It," by Beatrice Hunter, provides a guide on using less sugar.

Some foods contain naturally occurring sugars. One such is fructose in fruit. Another is lactose in milk. There's that "ose" again. Generally, fresh fruit doesn't come with a label listing ingredients, but milk does come with a nutrition label that will list the amount of sugar in the milk.

Also, don't think that lactose-free milk is free of sugar. The lactose simply has been converted to a couple of simple sugars through the use of the enzyme lactase.

Speaking of sugar-free, many sugar-free products use sugar alcohols as the sweetener. The most commonly used are maltitol, sorbitol, isomalt and xylitol. Watch for the "itol" suffix on labels. Sugar alcohols, a type of carbohydrate, absorb only partially. This makes their impact less on blood sugar and they provide fewer calories. They don't promote tooth decay, and xylitol inhibits bacterial growth so it's frequently used in sugar-free chewing gum.

Unfortunately, because sugar alcohols don't completely absorb, they can sit and ferment in the intestines causing bloating, gas and diarrhea.

People react differently, so careful use and experimentation is advised. Moderation in its use is the best idea.

"Prevention's the Sugar Solution: Your Symptoms are Real — and

Your Solution is Here," by the editors of Prevention magazine with Ann Fittante, provides information on blood sugar and a sugar-free diet.

These titles and others — including "Get the Sugar Out: 501 Ways to Cut the Sugar in Any Diet" by Ann Louise Gittleman, or "Little Sugar Addicts: End the Mood Swings, Meltdowns, Tantrums, and Low Self-Esteem in Your Child Today" by Kathleen DesMaisons — are available at the Abilene Public Library.

Check them out to improve your family's sugar-consumption habits.

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